

PROGRAM POLICY COORDINATION WORKGROUP

MINUTES

July 8, 2004

1 West Wilson, Room 751

Attendees:

Sara Edmonds, DHFS/BHCE
Janet Even, DHFS/PPG
James Hennen, DHFS/SE Region
Jon Janowski, MHTF
Mal Jones, DHFS/BHCE
Kathy Judd, Dane Co./Training
Donna King, UWO/DHFS
John LaPhilliph, BHCE/DHCF
Sue Moline-Larson, LOPP
Julie Loebel, DHFS/BHCE Outreach

Carol Medaris, WCCF
Tadesse Mengesha, DWD/DWS/EPS
Michelle Pauser, DHFS/Call Center
Linda Preyz, DWD
Scott Riedasch, BHCE/DHCF
Sheryl Siegl, Winnebago County DHS
Jayne Wanless, DHFS/BHCE
Mike Wineke, Dane County DHS

Food Stamp Program Participation Grant Update

Janet Even

Janet updated the group on the progress being made with the self-assessment tool. They have provided final language to the development team based on reviews with clients, service providers and demonstration sites. It will be called ACCESS: **A**ccess to **E**ligibility **S**upport **S**ervices for Health and Nutrition. The title "Self-Help Wisconsin" is being saved to describe the broader based screening tool. The Deloitte programming team is in final stages of construction. System testing and User Acceptance testing will be conducted 7/5/04 through 8/6/04. The online tool will "go live" on 8/16/04 at demonstration sites with statewide promotion planned for early September 2004. The group asked for the internet address to be forwarded to them so they could experience it while still in testing stages. Janet will get this out to the group. Janet also shared a matrix detailing the evaluation methods for this project with intentions that the group read it over and it can be discussed in depth at the next meeting. Suggestions were offered as to what information should be collected in this evaluation. Customer usage will be tracked to some extent but we will have to rely on the demonstration site staff to relay customer feedback to us.

Food Stamp Program Policy Updates

Sara Edmonds/Jayne Wanless

Broad-based categorical eligibility was implemented on 6/13/04. New food stamp applicants will be considered categorically eligible if their gross income is at or below 200% FPL and information describing "JobNet" services is available to the group. This information is now on CARES generated notices and current recipients were issued a one-time notice with the new JobNet language on it. Categorical eligibility will not be available to anyone sanctioned due to an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) or sanctioned due to a felony drug conviction. Broad-based categorical eligibility will alleviate workload to agency staff by eliminating the need to collect asset information. It will also eliminate QC errors due to assets.

Food stamp cases that are technically "eligible" and receive zero benefits will be closed on 7/10/04. This will decrease participation somewhat but this decrease will be offset by the increase that will be created by broad-based categorical eligibility. There are pros and cons to implementing this and that was discussed briefly.

The first small batch of six-month report forms (SMRF) has gone out. The processing of these forms is being closely monitored. Next month the number of these forms will increase greatly. The SMRF will be re-formatted now that the asset question will be removed.

Elderly or disabled food stamp recipients who qualify for the new Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card must not have their FS benefits reduced as a result of using the card. This means that any subsidies or discounts on prescription drugs that cardholders receive must be counted as excess medical expenses in the FS benefit determination, along with any out-of-pocket medical expenses the recipient may incur. This will be a complex policy to explain to workers as well as clients and we are working on an implementation policy memo with guidance from FNS. It is anticipated that this policy will impact very few Wisconsin residents since the SeniorCare program provides prescription drug coverage for low-income Wisconsin seniors. Medicaid and SeniorCare recipients are not eligible for a Medicare drug card.

Medical Assistance for Released Inmates

John LaPhilliph

Secretary Nelson signed the MOU to start this process effective 7/8/04. On June 1st, Holly Jackson from Training held a training for DOC staff on Medicaid applications. CMS has recently issued a memo to state Medicaid Directors. John was not sure whether the memo was advisory or was a recommendation but it advises the states not to terminate Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals. Federal law indicates that no federal match would be available for this group so basically it should be funded entirely by the states. Wisconsin has statutes and administrative rules covering this, so somehow these individuals would have to be placed in "suspension" during the incarceration. CMS was questioned as to whether the states would then be able to claim federal administrative costs for these individuals while "suspended," but we have not yet received an answer.

Funeral & Cemetery Aids Program

Scott Riedasch

Some progress is being made. Discussions are ongoing within the Department regarding how best to resolve the funding issues associated with this program (e.g., policy/process changes, appropriation changes via the 05-07 budget, etc.). Scott will update the group at the next meeting.

Drop in BadgerCare Cases

Scott Riedasch

Carol Medaris asked about the drop in BadgerCare cases in May. It could perhaps be the increase in premiums but some in the group felt that it more than likely has been caused by the employer verification of income and health insurance access now required for that program. These forms are sent to the customer to be taken to the employer and the customer should be forwarding the forms back to be scanned in at EDS. Mike Wineke stated that approximately 80% of these cases are "exceptioning off" meaning that during the scanning process certain data elements were questionable perhaps caused by employers not correctly filling out the form. It was felt that some of these cases have closed due to employers not responding at all. Michelle Pauser indicated that more information to caseworkers as to how to correct some of these difficulties will be issued. Jim Hennen has been getting calls at the regional level with concerns with these cases closing. John LaPhilliph stated that when he had checked into this only approximately 100 cases had closed due to lack of the form at the end of May. Some of these cases probably closed in June. The state is closely monitoring this process.

Other Discussions

A discussion was held regarding increasing local agency staff presence on this committee. Several ideas were offered such as teleconferencing and recruiting those already in Madison for the IMAC IT committee (held on the same day). Jon Janowski asked us to reinforce to prospective members that their input on this committee does have a direct link to decisions made at the state level. Jim Hennen will make an effort to recruit in his region.

Next Meeting - Thursday, August 11, 2004 - 12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Room 349 at GEF III.